

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7604

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CIA

REF: CANBERRA 3589

1. WE FULLY SHARE THE EMBASSY'S LOW REGARD FOR THE LEVEL OF LOCAL JOURNALISTIC RESPONSIBILITY, BUT HAVE OUR OWN CANDIDATE FOR THE ABSOLUTE NADIR DURING THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN BY THE SYDNEY SUN AGAINST THE CIA. ON APRIL 28 THE SYDNEY SUN CARRIED A STORY HEADLINED "CIA SUSPECT-LETTER BOMBS LINK, BY A SUN REPORTER" WHICH BEGAN QUOTE:

"DID THE CIA SEND LETTER BOMBS TO LEADING AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC FIGURES BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS WHICH SWEEPED THE LIBERAL PARTY TO POWER?

"THE LETTER BOMBS WERE SENT TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, SIR JOHN KERR, THE THEN CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER, MR. FRASER AND THE QUEENSLAND PREMIER, MR. BJELKE-PETERSEN.

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ZFEDERAL SECURITY AGENCIES, INCLUDING ASIO AND ASIS, HAVE ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT EXPERT EXPLOSIVE TECHNICIANS DEvised THE LETTER BOMBS, DESPITE THEIR AMATEURISH CONSTRUCTION." END QUOTE. IT INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS: QUOTE. "SECURITY OFFICIALS BELIEVE TESTIMONY BEING GIVEN AT THE LOS ANGELES SPY TRIAL IS THE 'TIP OF THE ICEBERG' IN THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY'S COVERT OPERATIONS IN AUSTRALIA.

"THEY BELIEVE REVELATIONS MAY BE MADE OF THE CIA'S CAMPAIGN TO REMOVE THE WHITLAM MINISTRY FROM OFFICE.

"OFFIC ALS SAID TODAY THE CIA MOUNTED A MAJOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE LABOR GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF ITS 'ANTI-US DOCTRINE". END QUOTE.

2. THE SCURRILIOUS IRRESPONSIBILITY OF THIS ITEM BROUGHT FORTH A DEFENSE OF THE CIA FROM THE MOST UNEXPECTED OF SOURCES, THE WEEKLY "TRIBUNE" PUBLISHED BY THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THER COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA. ON MAY 4 THE TRIBUNE PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE TOGETHER WITH A PHOTOGRAPH OF ONE OF THE LETTER BOMBS.

QUOTE. "WHOSE LETTER BOMB? "DID THE CIA SEND LETTER BOMBS TO LEADING AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC FIGURES BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS....?"

"THIS QUESTION WAS POSED BY AN ANONYMOUS SYDNEY SUN REPORTER ALMOST AS SOON AS THE CIA REVELATIONS BROKE LAST WEEK. "THE REPORTER'S STORY THEN PILES UP EVIDENCE TO SHOW THAT THE LETTER BOMBS WERE MADE TO LOOK LIKE THE WORK OF AN AMATEUR BUT WERE DONE VERY PROFESSIONALLY. ""THERE WERE NO FINGERPRINTS WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT BY AMATEURS - EVEN HAD THEY BEEN SMUDGED.

""SPUTUM TESTS PROVED NEGATIVE. SPITTLE WAS APPARENT ON ALL MAILED DOCUMENTS.
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ZJ THE ENVELOPES HAD BEEN PREPARED IN CONDITIONS WHICH PREVENTED DUST FROM THE AREA OF CONSTRUCTION LODGING ON THE PAPER - ALL MARKS OF A PROFESSIONAL.'

"THE ARTICLE APPEARS TO BE USING INTELLIGENCE LEAKS - BUT SOME JOURNALISTS BELIEVE THE STORY HAS THE HALLMARKS OF A 'PLANTED' STORY FROM ASIO.

"IF YOU ASSUME THAT AUSTRALIAN INTELLIGENCE DID PLANT THE STORY, THE "NATIONAL TIMES" JOURNALISTS ASK 'WHY WERE THEY ATTACKING THEIR OLD FRIENDS THE CIA?"

"THE ANSWER SEEMS CLEAR: AUSTRALIAN INTELLIGENCE HAS SOMETHING TO HIDE. THEIR AGENTS SENT LETTER BOMBS AS PART OF A PROVOCATION AND NOW THEY WANT TO COVER THEMSELVES.

"WHAT BETTER WAY THAN TO PIN THE BLAME ON THE POPULAR WHIPPING BOY, THE CIA." END QUOTE.

3. MEANWHILE, THE NAMING OF A CONSULATE EMPLOYEE AS A CIA AGENT BY PHILLIP AGEE YESTERDAY EVENING HAS CAUSED A NEW SURGE OF LOCAL INTEREST. TELEVISION CAMERAS AND LIGHTS WERE SET UP FOR MOST OF THE DAY IN THE CORRIDOR LEADING FROM THE CONSULATE'S FRONT DOOR TO THE REST ROOMS. THEIR DEPARTURE THIS AFTERNOON WAS A CONSIDERABLE RELIEF TO CONSULATE STAFF.

4. THE CONSULATE GENERAL HAS REPLIED WITH "NO COMMENT" TO THE MULTITUDE OF INQUIRIES RECEIVED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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